NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

SILVOPASTURE ESTABLISHMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 381

DEFINITION

An application establishing a combination of trees or shrubs and compatible forages on the same acreage.

PURPOSE

Provide forage for livestock and the production of wood products.

Increase carbon sequestration.

Improve water quality.

Reduce erosion.

Enhance wildlife habitat.

Reduce fire hazard.

Provide shade for livestock.

Develop renewable energy systems

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Situations where silvopasture establishment applies includes:

1) Pasture where trees or shrubs can be added;
2) Forest where forages can be added;

3) Land on which neither the desired trees nor forages exist in sufficient quantity to meet the land user's objectives.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Selecting Plant Species:

Tree species must be adapted to the site and compatible with planned livestock management.

Forage species must be adapted to the site and compatible with the planned management of the site.

No plants on the Federal or state noxious weeds list shall be planted.

Density and Spacing of Trees;

The density between row sets of trees/shrubs and the general density of trees/shrubs will depend on:

Tree/shrub management objectives.

Light requirements and growth period of forage crops.

Erosion control needs.

Machinery widths and turning areas.

Site Preparation and Planting.

Where trees will be added to existing pasture, site preparation should be based on existing vegetation and soil conditions. (Refer to SC Tree/Shrub Site Preparation Standard 490.) Trees will be planted at the recommended tree density. (Refer to SC Tree/Shrub Establishment Standard 612.)

For existing forests where forage will be established, site preparation should include:

Removal of a sufficient number of trees and/or prune existing trees to allow adequate light penetration for forage establishment.

Prescribed burning where pine stands are being converted to silvopasture; (Refer to SC Prescribed Burning-Practice Standard 338).

Seedbed Preparation: (If stumps interfere with equipment operation they should be allowed to decay before attempting to establish forage crops).

Establishment of forage species will be in accordance with SC Forage and Biomass Planting Standard 512 If pesticides are used, follow label recommendations.

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Only viable, high quality, and adapted planting stock or seed will be used.

Planting shall be done at a time and manner to insure survival and growth of selected species.

Additional Criteria to Provide Forage for Livestock and the Production of Forest.

The forage species must be identified as suitable for the targeted livestock.

Livestock grazing shall be deferred until the average height of the tree's terminal bud exceeds the browsing height of the livestock or of sufficient size to resist breakage or until suitable use exclusion measures for the protection of the woody plants are established. A forage crop (hay, silage, etc.) may be harvested during this period.

Plant trees at an appropriate density to allow acceptable forage production and wood products.

The tree or shrub species must have potential to yield wood products.

Additional Criteria to Increase Carbon Sequestration

For optimal carbon sequestration, select plants that have higher rates of sequestration and are adapted to the site to assure strong health and vigor.

Plant and manage the appropriate stocking rate for the site to maximize biomass production.

Additional Criteria to Improve Water Quality

Favor trees, shrubs and forages that have growth characteristics conducive to high nutrient uptake.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Erosion

Place linear woody plantings on or near the contour when water erosion is a concern.

Additional Criteria to Enhance Wildlife Habitat

Establish forage species and understory shrubs that will provide forage, browse, seed, cover, or nesting habitat for the wildlife species of concern. For additional guidance refer to SC Upland Wildlife Habitat Management Standard 645.

Favor herbaceous seed mixes that include a diverse mix of native forbs and/or legumes to benefit wildlife including pollinators.

Additional Criteria for Develop Renewable Energy Systems

Select plants that provide adequate kinds and amounts of plant material needed to produce bioenergy feedstocks.

Intensity and frequency of energy biomass removals will be managed to prevent long-term negative impacts on the soil and water resources.

The harvesting of energy biomass shall be accomplished in a manner that will not compromise the other intended purpose(s) and functions

CONSIDERATIONS

Failure to maintain adequate forage for livestock may result in excessive tree damage and/or loss.

Location and distribution of facilities for water, minerals, or supplemental feed should be such that livestock are not encouraged to over-utilize areas of silvopasture.

Rows should be oriented in an east-west orientation where feasible and practical to allow maximum sunlight onto grass strips.

If grazing does not maintain reduced fuel loads, prescribed burning should be considered providing the woody plants are fire-adapted and will not be damaged.

Wildlife and pollinators should be considered when selecting tree or shrub species. Species diversity, including use of native species, should be considered.

Consider using native vegetation. Also consider the invasive potential when selecting plant species.

Silvopasture establishment may not be feasible in some existing forest and woodland communities.

Consideration should be given to adverse offsite effects.

Plants established in cropping systems should have root systems that have minimal impact on crop growth.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets,

technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

Minimum documentation for this practice includes:

- Plant materials or species (forage and tree/shrub) to be established.
- Plant spacing and arrangement/width of plantings (stocking rate of trees/shrubs).
- Site preparation and planting method(s).
- Site specific needs for soil amendments, cultural, pest management or other practices.
- Time or season of year to establish the silvopasture practice.
- Statement requiring compliance with all federal, state and local laws.

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OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Forage and forest management will follow SC Prescribed Grazing 528 and SC Forest Stand Improvement 666 Standards.

Replanting will be required when plant survival is inadequate to meet practice and client objectives.

Competing vegetation will be controlled until the trees are established.

Periodic applications of nutrients may be needed for establishment and to maintain plant vigor. Refer to SC Nutrient Management Standard 590 for further guidance.

Inspect trees and shrubs periodically and protect from adverse impacts including insects, diseases or competing vegetation. The trees or shrubs will also be protected from wildfire and damage from livestock and wildlife.

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